

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

JANICE ELIZABETH OLIVER HAMILTON

October 4, 1967



Janice Elizabeth Oliver Hamilton was born on March 23, 1919 in East Lansing, Michigan, to William L. and Alice S. Oliver. Her father was a pastor, and her mother a homemaker. Hamilton grew up in Lansing during the depression. In order to help her large family, Hamilton decided to add to the family coffers by making use of the connections she had established by selling Girl Scout candy to the workers in the shops in her neighborhood. She found a store where she could buy candy bars in bulk and then sell them at a profit, though still cheaper than the machines, and always with a smile and some chatter. Occasionally, Hamilton used her profits to buy supplies so her mother could make some candy to sell for even more money.

Hamilton graduated from Central High School in Lansing in 1936. Thereafter, she went to work in F. N. Arbaugh Co., a department store in Lansing, and beginning in March 1937 in the printing department at Michigan State University. Hamilton attended Michigan State from September 1938 to March 1939 and while there, met fellow student Clarence J. ("C. J.") Hamilton. On August 25, 1940, they were married in Lansing. Immediately thereafter, in September 1940, the couple moved to Wallace, Idaho to maintain the family interests in the Lincoln mines.

Before long the Hamiltons decided to further their education and applied to the University of Idaho. In 1941, Janice enrolled in the Home Economics program, while C. J. entered the College of Law. In 1942, however, C. J. was called to active duty. Janice, pregnant with their first child, stayed on at the University of Idaho and completed her first year of college. She then returned to Michigan and worked at Abrahms, an aerial tool and die factory, making bombsights, and attended Michigan State from March to June 1943. Hamilton also made at least three train trips to Idaho in order to see to the Lincoln mines and oversee various agreements with the Sunshine Mining Company.

When C. J. returned from active duty in 1945, the family briefly lived with him in San Antonio, Texas, before returning to the University of Idaho where C. J. re-entered law school. C. J. earned his Juris Doctor degree three years later in 1948. At the time, Janice was pregnant with their second child, and worked at a photo developing and printing company. After C. J. graduated from law school, the family moved to Coeur d'Alene where C. J. was the prosecuting attorney for Kootenai County from 1949-50.

In 1950, C. J. was called back to the Army during the Korean Conflict and the Hamiltons moved to Augusta, Georgia. In March 1952, the family returned to Coeur d'Alene again and C. J. began a career in private practice. Although she continued to work at various jobs, including selling Fuller Brush and Community silver, Hamilton was primarily a homemaker during this time.

By the late 1950s, Hamilton decided it was time to go back to school. She enrolled in North Idaho Junior College from September 1959 through June 1960, and the University of Idaho beginning in September 1960. For the next year she attended classes at the University of Idaho and took several correspondence courses, earning enough credits to graduate with a degree in Business Administration in 1961.

Although Hamilton attend law school at the University of Idaho College of Law from February through June 1966, she applied for the Bar under the apprenticeship program that many of the early women lawyers had taken advantage of. In preparation for this route, Hamilton studied in her husband's law office and under his tutelage. On October 4, 1967, Hamilton was admitted to the Idaho Bar and holds the distinction as the last person admitted in Idaho through the apprenticeship-licensing program. Hamilton joined her husband's practice in Coeur d'Alene and for many years they operated the law partnership of Hamilton & Hamilton, until the office closed in 1992.

Juggling family responsibilities with community service was always a priority for Hamilton. Starting in 1973, she agreed to pursue leadership in the Daughters of the Nile. Supporting their work for the Shriner's Hospital assumed most of her energies at the time. She remains active as Past Honored Queen and former national officer in that organization. Hamilton has been a member and leader at various levels of Ladies of Kiwanis and the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to donating freely of her time, Janice and C. J. have been generous in donating their money to worthy causes. In 1996, the Hamiltons donated \$25,000 to North Idaho College to create a scholarship fund in memory of their late son, Jack. And, in 1998, the Hamiltons established the *C. J. and Janice Hamilton Law School Scholarship Endowment* at the University of Idaho with an initial gift of \$50,000 of U.S. Bank stock. This endowment awards funds to law students based on need.

Hamilton reports that studying law was actually a family-oriented goal, in that by joining C. J.'s practice she hoped to free him up to pursue traveling, which they did extensively through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Their travels have taken them to all seven continents, including cruises to the North Pole and Antarctica.

The Hamiltons live in Coeur d'Alene. Together they raised three children: William, a career Army officer, was a pilot and concluded his military career in 1996; Jill Jurvelin, lives in Coeur d'Alene with her husband and family; and Jack (deceased). They have three grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.